

JAIL NEEDS SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING-5th Floor-Conference Room
JANUARY 29, 2026 – 3:00 PM
MINUTES

Call to Order:

Sheriff Saaranen called the meeting to order at 3:06 p.m.

Roll Call:

The following responded to County Clerk, Jennifer Kelly:

Sheriff Josh Saaranen, Detective Charlie Klein, Captain Travis Dessellier, Susanna Peters, and Faith Morrison.

By Microsoft Teams: Valorie Troesch

Late arrival: Justin LaCosse

Approval of Agenda/Additions:

Motion was made by Faith Morrison and seconded by Susanna Peters to approve the agenda as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 6, Nays 0.

Approval of January 12, 2026 minutes:

Motion was made by Faith Morrison and seconded by Charlie Klein to approve the January 12, 2026 minutes as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 6, Nays 0.

Public Comments:

Carolyn Peterson indicated that she came to the meeting because communicating with the public is so important and that we need to gain support for the jail.

New Business:

A. Update on Jail Committee:

Faith Morrison updated the Subcommittee on the Sharon Avenue Property Committee meeting that was held that morning. She discussed the jail, how small the rooms are that hold the services in the jail, how more beds are needed.

Valorie Troesch discussed what the core space issues are. She discussed Justin LaCosse's AI video that is all audio and lasts 12-14 minutes. It has all four (4) scenarios. Suggested adding visuals. Suggested everyone listen to it. Feels people are needed. Then for it to be released to social media.

Faith Morrison received feedback from people who stated the video that she made needs to be shortened. Troesch suggested that people are needed in the pictures taken in the jail to really show how tight the spaces are.

B. Public Information Specialist:

Alex Radke, IT for the County, has some names of people possibly interested in doing social media/public information for the County. He will give the names to Sheriff Saaranen, and the Sheriff can give them to Jared Hyrkas (chair of the Jail Committee) and other groups.

C. Dessellier's scenarios:

Faith Morrison stated she has turned one (1) of Travis Dessellier's scenario into a video as discussed above.

Morrison provided the following numbers for the adjusted square footage of the jail/sheriff's office departmental spaces as calculated by the consultants from AbonmarchByce:

		Source: Houghton County Master Plan Charette version 2-22-25 page 60 "Existing Space Evaluation Summary"	Current Net Sq Ft (NSF)	Adjusted NSF (how big a 51 inmate jail should be)	Adjusted NSF/Current NSF (how many times larger the current space should be for current ADP with classification)
I.	Sheriff's office				
A	Public	274	1,088	4.0	
B	Exec Admin	1,674	2,344	1.4	
C	Road Patrol	2,381	4,350	1.8	
D	Investigations	1,138	2,708	2.4	
E	Marine/ORV/Snowmobile	2,042	2,000	1.0	
	subtotal	7,509	12,490	1.7	
	average rating:				
II.	Corrections				
F	Administration	216	933	4.3	
G	Intake/Booking	653	2,234	3.4	
H	Medical	98	588	6.0	
I	Confinement Housing	2,366	5,070	2.1	
J	Program	663	1,725	2.6	
K	Kitchen/Laundry	647	1,410	2.2	
	subtotal	4,643	11,960	2.6	
	average rating:				
III.	Support				
L	Support	899	2,288	2.5	
	subtotal	899	2,288	2.5	
	TOTAL Departments sqft:	13,051	26,738		

D. LaCosse's system:

Justin LaCosse discussed how he turned the four (4) scenarios into an AI-generated audio podcast.

Faith Morrison discussed that the consultant's report calculated departmental spaces based on 51 beds based on the average daily population of the jail and then taking into account classification issues. The hope is to build a 60, 70 or 80 bed facility.

Sheriff Saaranen noted that you never want to be full in a jail. Eighty sounds like a lot of beds for a jail, but we have had 60 inmates in our jail. We do not want to have to come back to the voters for additional spaces in the near future.

Susana Peters said there could be other options rather than a bigger jail. Maybe a bunk house or a work camp.

Valorie Troesch stated there are different kinds of bed space.

Sheriff Saaranen stated that Morrison's square-foot numbers should be presented to the Jail Committee.

Charlie Klein discussed the area in the jail used for evidence storage. He said there is a sewer pipe in that room that causes big concern. They must keep evidence for many years. There has been flooding in this room in the past. He discussed bunkhouse options for minimum security.

Morrison suggested Klein could write a scenario on the evidence storage.

Sheriff Saaranen said the sheriff of Ingham County had a sewer leak in their property room and a great deal of evidence had to be discarded and therefore lost.

Susanna Peters asked if evidence could be stored off site.

Klein responded that for chain-of-custody reasons they cannot do that.

Justin LaCosse returned to discussing his work with diagramming the activities that go on in the jail. Could do something on why the jail needs the things they do. He has diagramed the scenarios written by Dessellier. There are tasks for the departments that must be done and we can contrast the list of tasks with the actual pictures of the space. He discussed using these in conversations with the public and in social media activities.

Faith Morrison discussed putting things before the County Board. May need professional help in preparing for this. It's a big job.

Sheriff Saaranen discussed assessing the needs of the jail.

Faith Morrison referenced the consultant's report and how the spaces are broken down per department (see table above). A courtroom would have to be added as this is an agreed upon addition to the jail. She discussed funding some social media work to share with the public.

Valorie Troesch suggested Faith Morrison do a preliminary recommendation on the number of spaces needed in a new jail and a courtroom.

Sheriff Saaranen stated he has the needs for the new jail and will discuss them later.

Faith Morrison stated the County Board needs to construct a Master Plan and think long term. The public wants to see that the long-term needs of the County are driving the jail plan as well as other actions of the Board.

Old Business:

Update on Action Items from January 12, 2026:

The Committee tabled the Action items until the next meeting.

Action Items from Last Meeting (tabled):

1. Faith Morrison will ask Administrator Rheault, Roy Britz, and Tom Tikkanen if the county's audit document contains the values of all of its properties.
2. Sheriff will talk to Administrator Rheault, Roy Britz, Jared Hyrkas, and Joel Keranen to consider running a public event to let the public weigh in on the location of the jail before action is taken to decide on the location.
3. The Sheriff will check on the challenges of designing a courtroom at the new jail so that members of the public could attend hearings at the jail.
4. The Sheriff said he would need to talk to legal advisors about the proposed videos.
5. Morrison will work with the Sheriff to see if we can make a video as a proof of concept. Would have to pass legal muster, however.
6. Sheriff will track down narratives of how the job of law enforcement in Houghton County has evolved over the last 20 years.
7. Morrison will consider a press release with the inmate history discussed above.
8. Sheriff will have an update on the police blotter at a later date.
9. Morrison will stop and see Todd VanDyke and request a series of public service announcements.
10. Sheriff will get a more in-depth list of spaces the current jail has and what they should be together.
11. Morrison will continue looking into the square footages listed in the Master Plan.

Next meeting date and time:

The Committee agreed to meet next on **Wednesday, February 11, 2026 at 9:30 a.m.** in the 5th floor conference room, with Teams available.

Public Comments

Jennifer Kelly noted that we always talk about "the jail" but we do not mention the sheriff's office. Is it just the jail or both?

Sheriff Saaranen said that although the law does not require the two to be together, in his opinion he wants the sheriff's office with the jail, not separate.

Kelly commented that the nurse's area in the jail is not ADA accessible. Travis Dessellier said that if an inmate cannot come down the stairs, the nurse comes up. Dessellier also said that there has been a leaky sewage pipe about the nurse's station that has caused problems.

Adjournment:

Motion was made by Faith Morrison and seconded by Charlie Klein to adjourn the meeting at 4:03 p.m..

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 6, Nays 0.

JOSH SAARANEN
Sheriff

JENNIFER KELLY
COUNTY CLERK/REGISTER OF DEEDS

APPROVED: _____
JK